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The Life of Abraham Lincoln, drawn from Original Sources and containing many Speeches, Letters and Telegrams hitherto unpublished. By IDA M. TARBELL. (New York: Doubleday and McClure Co. 1900. Two vols., pp. 426, 459.)

Abraham Lincoln, the Man of the People. By NORMAN HAPGOOD. (New York: The Macmillan Co. 1899. Pp. xiii, 433.)

BESIDES the monumental work which Nicolay and Hay properly entitled "A History," Lincoln has been the subject of many volumes; but we think they will nearly all be found to be contributions to his biography and to the history of his time, rather than symmetrical, proportioned, and harmonious works, the literary analogue of the painted portrait which hands a great man down to posterity. Most of the books we have in mind make Personal Recollections either the chief or the sub-title, thus disclaiming the purpose to treat Mr. Lincoln's life as a unit or to present the whole of it with well-considered relation and subordination of parts.

Miss Tarbell's book has grown out of two series of successful papers which she contributed to *McClure's Magazine* and which embodied the results of an extensive and well-organized search for new material. The first series related to the early life of Lincoln and brought to light evidence which fairly modifies and corrects some of the rather extravagant stories which have been current regarding the penury and the lack of educational and social advantages of his childhood. It also developed with some success an intelligible account of the unfolding of his powers and qualities in his early manhood, and removed the air of miraculous growth which hung about a career sufficiently remarkable. The second series dealt with his mature life, for which full data were already published, and where the author could only glean here and there, collecting the recollections of a wider circle of witnesses and the correspondence of persons more or less well acquainted with Mr. Lincoln. The whole has now been brought together, the story of the life has been made consecutive, compilation of accepted facts and anecdotes from published authorities has been added, even the minuter and less important of Lincoln's letters and dispatches have been collected and added. The result is a popular life of the man, well calculated to have vogue among the people at large. From the point of view of students of history its chief importance will be found in the field the author originally worked,—the addition to our store of materials of varying importance touching Lincoln's career, especially his childhood and youth, and that of his parents.

Mr. Hapgood makes no claim to original research. His aim is, however, more ambitious as literature. He uses the collected materials of others, and seeks to draw for us a portrait in the realistic style which shall make us feel its verisimilitude in all the phases of Lincoln's wonderful history. He gives us the key to his purpose by saying "The biography of such a man can afford honesty." So it can; but what is honesty in portraiture, whether with brush or pen? Other biographers, whom he criticizes, would probably assert the principle as earnestly as he.

There are misleading disclosures as well as honest reticences. Every situation in nature has an infinity of detail. We must choose and reject, and the result will be judged by the success with which we have chosen the important and so made them dominate in a harmonious whole as to give assurance of a character equal to the work the great man actually accomplished. If, when we study the portrait, we cannot fit his character and career to the figure and features, it is a failure as a portrait, whatever it may be as a *genre* picture. Treating a biography as a literary work of art, if it does not subordinate the transient to the permanent, the trivial to the important, accidents to characteristics, the body to the soul, it lacks "honesty" in the right sense of the word, which is essential and harmonious truth.

Mr. Hapgood says "Let us not try to make our great man like other great men. Let us allow him to reach as high as the saints in one direction and as high as Rabelais in another. Let him be the prairie male as well as the sage and martyr; the deft politician as well as the generous statesman. Paint him as he is." If this means that we want characteristic truth in the portrait, we are all agreed. If we object to a conventional toga-clad figure, it does not follow that we must present our hero in the nude. Our rule should be found in Niebuhr's fine saying which Keller quotes: "It is not well that the world should see a man through and through; there are decent clothes of the soul that one should no more strip off than those of the body."¹

Mr. Hapgood's book is not so startling as his portentous preface might lead us to expect. His scheme seems to be to connect, as nearly as may be, samples of Mr. Lincoln's homely but apt illustrations with the acts and scenes of his life, all the way through. He must appear "in character" at each entrance. With the author's lively and vigorous style a book is made which will no doubt have greater popular favor than if it conformed more closely to the ideal of truth and honesty which we are trying to present. There is very little that is offensive in the anecdotal part of the biography. Our criticism is, rather, that the total effect produced is that Mr. Lincoln was an amusing person. The author assures us, in "asides," that he was really a great man, that he had the most earnest and serious purposes, that his nature tended to pathetic sadness, but the effect remains. This is because strong colors and high flavors have a way of asserting themselves unduly. A very little garlic in a salad is plenty: a very little more makes it all garlic. A few witty speeches by a public man will give him the name of the "Wag of the House," and many an able man has bewailed the fact that after this he could never make his audience take him seriously. The ideally "honest" biographer will use effectual means to correct the false impression. That Mr. Lincoln was taken seriously whenever he chose to be, is itself the proof that the humorous vein in him was not prominent in his public appearances, but was,

¹ Keller's *Life of Bächtold*, preface. "Es sei nicht gut dass die Welt jeden bis ins Innere kenne; es gebe Kleider der Seele, die man ebenso wenig abziehen sollte, wie die des Körpers."

in the main, kept for the enlivening of social intercourse. If we are made to expect amusement whenever he appears, we are misled as to the man.

Nearly all the published stories concerning Mr. Lincoln which have jarred upon good taste, have related to his youth. The escapades or the ludicrous experiences of a boy have no claim, in themselves, to a place in the biography of an important personage. To entitle them to it, they must be so connected with his development that the matured character cannot be understood without them. Writing an amusing book about a man should never be mistaken for writing his biography. The biographer profits by the study of much that he does not put into his work. He is, at his best, an artist, full of knowledge of his subject and sure in his command of his art. He knows how to exhibit a noble character so that its nobility shall inspire awe, whilst its individuality is still distinct and unmistakable. If a subordinate trait, a wart on the face, a drawl in the voice, a limp in the gait, is made impertinently self-asserting, the result is only an amusing or an odious caricature.

Childhood and youth are marked by one's progress from the innocent animality of the new-born babe toward the rational self-control and conscientious obedience to an ideal of right which ought to mark the moral maturity of the man. A skillful, brief sketch of the fun-loving, mischievous boy helps us to understand the task he mastered in overcoming the temptations to idle amusement, and in working honestly for mental discipline and furnishing. To describe all the practical jokes, the awkward, ungainly actions, only fastens to the great man's name a series of pictures exhibiting him as an object for derisive laughter. The laughter, in such cases, gets much of his pleasure from a feeling of superiority to the object of his amusement.

In Mr. Lincoln's case, candid study of his youth shows an early and strong attraction toward intellectual pursuits and moral development. In spite of his fun, his copy-books show a hand-writing that was formed for life, several years earlier than is usually the case, even with boys who have the best educational advantages. This implies a good deal of practice in writing, with a steady purpose. His arithmetic showed easy mastery of accurate calculation, with precision of statement and of process. The implication here is of clear comprehension of the logic of mathematical reasoning. Unconscious taste made him form and stick to a simple and very direct style of speech, with transparent clearness of meaning. There was no reason why he might not have formed as showy a rhetorical method as Douglas or other political orators of the state who grew up with him in the same community. He not only chose his style intentionally, but loved to emphasize the difference with others. In his professional work he preferred a colloquial phrase to a technical one, if it were as clear and free from ambiguity. Verbal fluency which covered inaccurate thinking he despised and would ridicule by purposely opposing to it a real thought in commonest idiom.

His moral nature was also sensitive and alert, and though, like notable examples before him, when he would do good, evil was sometimes

present with him, he gives abundant evidence that in such cases his conscience goaded him and that he was never deaf to its voice. There is a touch of pathetic humor mingled with self-judgment, even in the childish jingle he added to the inscription of his name in his copy-book, "He will be good, but God knows when." This sensitive conscience was joined to a tenderly sympathetic spirit which made him instantly respond to appeals for help or pity. To cause misery in another was a double misery to himself, and the apprehension that he had done so was the explanation of conduct, eccentric almost to the point of derangement, in one or two crises of his young life.

The anecdotal biographies produce an untrue effect by the very means that makes them amusing reading. The high-colored stories blind us to the tenderer tints of the life. Every picture-gallery bears witness to the fact that a canvas in a high key kills its near neighbor in a quieter one; still more is it ruin to force such contrasts in the same work. Lincoln's life was in real harmony from beginning to end, for it was the constant evolution of a rare nature. The rude surroundings of his childhood were not vicious. Frontier life was full of rough experiences, but the frontiersmen were of the most enterprising civilized stock, whose energy was bounding forward to create in a single generation the Illinois of 1860. The log cabin was not of kin to the wigwam: it was the temporary camp of a race that could build cities in a day, and was all astir with the energy inspired by the dim vision of what was soon to be accomplished. The boy Lincoln was the child of such a community, born to be its leader and the leader of the nation. The broader view is the truer one, and we miss it if we dwell too minutely on the puncheon floor and the scanty furniture of the cabin, or if we make too much of his rail-splitting and the first groping steps toward education and an intellectual life.

When his apprenticeship has been served and we find him a member of the legal profession, his importance grows as we discern that his fellow lawyers on the circuit not only enjoy his company at the tavern, but try their cases before him by consent, in the absence of the judge. Another step is taken when, in a great political struggle in his state, the public men and lawyers who know him best, from the great city as well as from the country village, turn spontaneously to him to champion the cause of free labor against the unquestioned leader of the opposition, a man of national renown. Did they do it because he made them laugh in the careless group around the court-house door?

Again, with all his homeliness of form and feature he comes before a great metropolitan audience, and keenest critics, used to measure the foremost men of the time, forget everything but the great ideas they are listening to, the invincible logic, the powerful array of facts, the seer-like views of the nation's destiny, and the patriot's faith in the triumph of right. They go away to bear witness to the wisdom, the logic, the persuasiveness, the deep conviction which is contagious, the lofty moral tone which is inspiring, and with one accord proclaim that they have heard a

master-piece of successful advocacy. If the biographer does not make us forget trivialities, grotesqueness and awkwardness, as the Cooper Institute audience forgot them, he has not presented the man, but only accidental adjuncts of the man, the material part that clogs his soul. From such a picture we may turn to the statue that looks upon Lake Michigan from the park that bears his name, and standing before it reverently, we shall feel that genius can be true to form, and without disguising native proportions or softening the ruggedness of a single feature, may yet quicken the whole as the indwelling spirit was wont to do when rising to the dignity of its mission on earth. Cannot the written biography do the like? May it not make Lincoln's place in history from 1858 to his deplorable taking-off completely dominate the preparatory years? May it not make sympathy with his task, love for his human charity, admiration for his lucid intellect, worship for his patriotism, so mingle with our pity for his sadness and his death, that amusement will hardly tinge our emotions, but dwindle to the humorous single touch of human nature that makes us kin?

The shiftiness of the politician making appointments to placate faction or to carry an election, will be so covered by the sincere meekness of his response to the implied rebuke of a man like General Sherman, that we shall lay the fault to the political habits and methods of the time which he sadly admits and does not justify. As we go on with him toward the end, the will of a great ruler is more and more felt behind the simple-hearted amiability which superficial observers took for lack of grasp and of purpose. He has bent statesmen to his plan. He has shifted the commanders of great armies till those are found who can lead the armed nation in the stubbornest of campaigns. He has taught the necessity of continuous, unresting struggle till great columns, East and West, make no halt for winter or for summer, for storm or flood or weariness or hunger. Yet he hates the butchery of war, holds no malice in his heart, plans no vengeance, and unfeignedly sighs for peace, amnesty, freedom and brotherhood. When we stand in awe before the full revelation of such a character, we chide ourselves for our tardiness in recognizing it, and confess our fault in letting the outward form obscure the great soul within.

Life of General Nathan Bedford Forrest. By JOHN ALLAN WYETH, M.D. (New York: Harper and Brothers. 1899. Pp. xx, 656.)

WYETH'S *Life of Forrest* is a valuable and unusually interesting contribution to the literature of the Civil War in America. The author has industriously and carefully selected his material, and has used it judiciously and effectively. The biographical passages of the book fitly accomplish the purpose to which, in a work chiefly intended to be historical in his character, biography should be directed. Without exceeding due limits, the anecdotes related of Forrest's boyhood and the account